

## **COMAL INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT SPIRIT ORGANIZATION GUIDELINES**

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The purpose of the spirit organization program is to support school activities and school functions and to honorably represent Comal ISD. The role of a spirit organization representative goes beyond wearing the uniform. It is a responsibility given to an individual who shows leadership, honor, and integrity. Ultimately, the purpose is to create, promote and uphold school spirit in accordance with district/school policy.

### **STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING**

The following guidelines must be followed by all Comal Independent School District spirit organization members. Members of spirit organizations are representatives of Comal ISD and each member must maintain high moral and ethical standards. Membership is from tryout date to the last day of school the following school year.

Spirit organization members include, but are not limited to, cheerleaders, yell leaders, pep group members, dance team members, and school mascots.

### **CANDIDATES FOR MEMBERSHIP**

#### Section A – Candidacy

1. Candidates must be willing to abide by rules and follow directions.
2. Candidates must be willing to set high standards as a representative of Comal ISD.
3. Candidates must enjoy learning and performing the activities of a spirit leader.
4. Candidates must demonstrate responsibility at all times.
5. Candidates must strive toward excellence and understand that the schedule and discipline of a spirit organization member demands a high degree of determination, hard work, strength, dedication, and self discipline.
6. Candidates must have a desire to cooperate, to be “one of the group.” Individual exhibitions are not for the spirit organization member; learning to perform as a team is imperative.
7. The parents/guardians must be willing to meet all financial obligations of their student’s spirit organization membership (for example, uniform and activity costs). Full payment must be received by the campus’s specified date(s).
8. Candidates, pending eligibility status, will participate in all activities in which the organization is involved, including spirit activities, fundraising, and school and community events.
9. Candidates must exhibit and maintain a positive attitude toward school policies and regulations.

#### Section B – Grade Levels of Membership

The following are guidelines for Comal ISD. In some instances, because of fluctuating numbers of candidates and student body populations, the campus principal and cheer or dance director may, prior to the day of tryouts, modify the following levels. The grade levels listed are the students’ grade levels during the school year of membership in the spirit organization. Tryouts for most activities occur during the spring semester preceding the school year term of membership.

1. For middle school spirit organizations, seventh and eighth grade students are eligible for consideration.
2. For high school dance teams, ninth through twelfth grade students are eligible for consideration.
3. For the freshman cheerleading squad, ninth grade students are eligible for consideration.

4. For high school junior varsity cheerleading, ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade students are eligible for consideration.
5. For high school varsity cheerleading, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students are eligible for consideration.
6. Any sophomore or junior student not making the varsity cheer squad may be eligible for the junior varsity squad if the student consents in writing prior to the tryout.
7. Final team selection for all teams will be based on the natural point break at the discretion of the administrative designee and/or the coach/director.

## **QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP**

### Section A – Tryout Rubric

Each grade level and organization will distribute a Tryout Eligibility Rubric to interested parents and students at least one week prior to tryouts. Students must meet the organization's stated requirements to be eligible for tryouts.

### Section B – Tryout Eligibility

Having met the qualifications of the tryout rubric, the eligible applicant must complete the following:

1. All candidates must have a minimum cumulative grade point average of 75 for the grading period preceding tryouts.
2. All candidates and their parent/guardian(s) must attend a tryout orientation meeting or contact the coach/director for an appointment **prior** to tryouts. Failure to attend or meet with the coach/director will result in the candidate's ineligibility for tryouts. Prospective members and their parent/guardian(s) must understand that being a spirit organization representative requires time and expense.
3. All completed forms must be turned in **prior** to the first day of clinic or date designated by the coach/director.
4. For dance teams, new-to-school students may be eligible for an individual tryout. For high school, the student must supply the dance team director with a letter verifying the student's status as a dance team member at the student's previous school. For middle school, the director may allow for an individual tryout if the student requests that tryout prior to camp.

### Section C – Tryout Guidelines and Procedures

1. For cheerleading, tryout guidelines and procedures for the appropriate cheer season and a rubric for tumbling and jumps will be provided prior to tryouts.
2. For dance teams, tryout guidelines and procedures for the appropriate dance season and a tryout rubric will be provided prior to tryouts.
3. All judges' scores and decisions are final. If a parent wishes to view his/her student's individual tryout documents, the parent must make an appointment with the officiating administrator one week after tryouts. Parents are allowed to view only their student's individual documents. Parents are not allowed to view any other student's documents, nor the tally sheets.
4. All selected candidates and their parents will be required to sign a program contract.

## EXPECTATIONS AND STANDARDS FOR MEMBERS

### Roles and Responsibilities

1. Being a member of a Comal ISD spirit organization is an honor and a responsibility. Many people will look up to members because of their positions. Members will be recognized as spirit organization members in and out of school by other students and the community.
2. Members must follow all of the candidate expectations and standards.
3. Members must work to build an image of dedicated, hard-working, honest young adults who function as a team. Members will strive to improve themselves and others through positive interaction and accountability.
4. Spirit organization members must display consideration, cooperation, and dedication to maintain the integrity of the program.
5. Members will be held to high behavioral standards. The program requires that members consider their position as a spirit organization representative in their actions, both in and out of school.
6. Members must adhere to all school and district policies and codes of conduct.

## PARTICIPATION EXPECTATIONS FOR MEMBERS

### Section A – Participation

1. All members are required to attend assigned camp and all pre-camp/summer practices or be subject to discipline which could result in automatic dismissal from the program.
2. Middle school cheer and dance teams will not participate in competition events.
3. Members must attend all practices and performances scheduled by the coach/director. **ALL** members or their parent/guardian must make verifiable contact with the coach/director **BEFORE** being absent from a performance and/or practice. Sending someone other than parent/guardian or self to deliver a message of absence will not be accepted as contact. Calling the attendance office is not sufficient to excuse an absence. Any member absent from a practice or performance without notifying and receiving coach/director approval **PRIOR** to the function's scheduled time will be subject to discipline, unless the coach/director determines the situation involved extenuating circumstances that made prior approval impossible. Excused absences or excused participation because of illness or injury are allowed with doctors' notes only. If a doctor's note is excusing a student from participating, then another doctor's release must be given to the coach/director to reinstate the student to participate. Notes supplied by the parent are only to document absences, not to excuse them.
4. Pending eligibility, attendance restriction, or doctor's restriction, all members are required to perform at scheduled events.
5. Any member who has missed practice and/or not participated for non-school related reasons/activities may be eliminated from all performances for that specific week at the coach/director's discretion.

### Section B – Expectations

1. As a member of the spirit organization program, the student has made a commitment to make spirit leading a priority. All other activities must be scheduled around spirit organization membership.
2. Outside activities (such as gym practice) and work will **NOT** constitute a reason for being absent from, arriving tardy to, or leaving early from spirit organization activities. Conflicting school activities will be resolved among program directors. Absence from spirit organization activities because of activity conflicts may result in daily grade reduction in the spirit organization class.
3. Members are required to attend practices on time and to be wearing the correct practice uniform (head to toe). A member failing to wear the correct practice uniform will be subject to discipline and daily grade reduction in the spirit organization class.

4. Members are required to be punctual to performances, sign-in, wear the correct uniform (head to toe), and be ready to participate. If a member fails to wear the correct uniform, he/she will be subject to discipline. If a member is unable to retrieve the correct pieces, he/she will sit out of the performance and will be subject to discipline and daily grade reduction in the spirit organization class.
5. Members must discuss problems concerning the spirit organization with the coach/director.
6. Members must attend school one-half day as set forth by Comal ISD guidelines in order to be eligible to participate in that day's practice or performance. Unexcused absences and/or failure to follow school rules regarding attendance will result in administrative discipline and daily grade reduction in the spirit organization class.
7. A member must demonstrate responsible leadership and model appropriate behavior at all times.
8. Members must promote and maintain good relationships with faculty, administration, and the student body, and work cooperatively with other campus organizations.
9. All members must follow the rules and regulations of the Student Code of Conduct, the Spirit Organization Guidelines and the Spirit Organization Three Strike Policy.
10. Any member suspended from a particular game performance or school function for reasons other than academic suspension must remain dressed out and present at all subsequent workouts. He/she must continue to practice and uphold all spirit organization responsibilities. The coach/director will determine whether or not the member(s) is required to attend performances.
11. If a member is not in proper uniform, he/she will sit out of the performance.

## **GRADES AND GRADING**

1. Students must meet campus and district grade eligibility requirements to participate in extracurricular activities.
2. All members must be enrolled in the spirit organization class and will earn grades during class, practices, and performances.

## **UNIFORMS**

### Performance Uniforms

1. Performance uniforms are supplied by Comal ISD and are considered school property.
2. Each member must ensure that his/her uniform is clean, in good condition, and fits properly for each performance.
3. No part of the uniform will be worn except when so instructed by the coach/director.
4. Members may not wear any jewelry while in uniform, practicing, or performing. This includes belly button rings, tongue jewelry, and any other type of body piercing. Bandage coverings or any other objects (spacer/retainer) inserted in the pierced area will not be permitted. If a member is asked to remove the described jewelry and he/she refuses, then he/she will not be allowed to participate in the spirit organization activity.
5. Uniforms will be worn by spirit organization members only.
6. Uniforms must be cleaned, pressed, tagged, and returned by the date set by the coach/director.
7. Members must reimburse the school for any piece of their uniform that is damaged or missing.

### Practice Uniforms

Spirit organization members will be required to wear practice uniforms as designated by the coach/director.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### Performance Transportation

1. Transportation to away games shall be provided by the school district. All members must provide their own transportation to home games.
2. Members are required to ride to and from games/functions/activities in the provided transportation unless prior documentation authorizing alternate transportation has been approved by a designated school administrator. Only in extreme circumstances will a member be allowed to use alternate transportation.
3. Members will conduct themselves appropriately on all trips.

## **LETTER JACKETS**

A student must be a varsity spirit organization member for one year to receive a letter in a spirit organization activity.

## **FINANCES/FUNDRAISING**

1. All members are required to meet the financial requirements of the spirit organization. Fundraising activities may be provided throughout the year. All members are required to participate in fundraising activities.
2. Should a member not fulfill his/her financial requirements by the set deadline, he/she will become ineligible to try out for the following year's team.

## **PROBATION, SUSPENSION, DISMISSAL, PERMANENT REMOVAL AND RESIGNATION**

The two major discipline interventions for spirit organization members are probation points and the Three Strike Policy.

Probation points are administered by the coach/director and accumulate from tryout to tryout.

A student who receives three probation points is dismissed from the organization for the remainder of the spirit organization's season and is not eligible for tryouts and membership for the next participation year.

The Three Strike Policy addresses inappropriate on- and off-campus behavior, including but not limited to involvement with drugs, alcohol, weapons, or violence. This policy is a cumulative system that is followed over the course of a student's four (4) high school years. A student who receives three strikes under this policy is permanently dismissed from the organization and is ineligible for future membership in a Comal ISD spirit organization.

### Section A – Academic Probation

Although spirit organizations are not UIL activities, Comal ISD spirit organization members are required to meet UIL grade eligibility rules. Accordingly, any representative receiving a failing grade will become ineligible for the allotted time set by UIL guidelines. If a representative becomes ineligible, he/she will not be allowed to perform, travel with the squad, or wear the uniform to school or for any spirit organization performance for the term of the student's ineligibility.

### Section B – Discipline

1. Student Code of Conduct violations that result in a DAEP placement will be deemed conduct unbecoming of a spirit organization member and the student will be removed from the organization.
2. Coaches/Directors of extracurricular activities will develop and enforce standards of behavior that are higher than the district-developed Student Code of Conduct and may condition membership or participation in the activity on adherence to those standards.

3. Disciplinary decisions will draw on the professional judgment of the coach/director. He/she will use a range of discipline management techniques as appropriate. Discipline will be correlated to the seriousness of the offense and context of the situation. At any time and with just cause, the coach/director may suspend a spirit organization member and prohibit that member's participation in activities.
4. Conduct that is negative, rude or disrespectful toward the coach/director and/or the spirit organization will result in disciplinary action that may include removal from the spirit organization.

#### Section C – School Suspension

Each in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension assignment immediately puts the member on probation with the spirit organization.

#### Section D – Dismissal/Resignation

Dismissal involves a loss of membership from the organization. Resignation shall be defined as a choice made by the individual member that he/she no longer desires to participate in the organization.

1. Once a member has been dismissed or resigns, he/she loses all privileges of the organization.
2. Any student dismissed/resigned of his/her position in the spirit organization must fulfill all financial obligations for non-returnable/non-refundable merchandise and return all school-owned uniforms.
3. Resignation from the program will be for the duration of the school year. Any dismissed/resigned student loses all rights to recognition, letter jackets, team awards, etc. that are received after dismissal/resignation.
4. A student who resigns from the program but who may wish to try out in subsequent years must have written permission from the coach/director within one week of the resignation. Any student who resigns from the program without the permission of the coach or director is not eligible for tryouts for the subsequent year.
5. A student who is dismissed from a spirit organization because of probation points will not be eligible for spirit organization tryouts and membership for the next school year. A student who is dismissed because of the Three Strike Policy, regardless of probation point status, forfeits all high school eligibility for Comal ISD spirit organization membership.
6. The coach/director will decide whether or not to fill a vacancy on any team.

#### **GUIDELINE CHANGES AND INTERPRETATIONS**

The coaches/directors, in consultation with Comal ISD administrators, are the creators and interpreters of these guidelines. These guidelines may change at any time because of Texas Education Agency rule changes.

#### **COACH/DIRECTOR AUTHORITY/VETO CLAUSE**

The coach/director reserves the right to decide, on a case-by-case basis, the consequence(s) for actions of a member who has not upheld his/her obligations to the spirit organization. The length of time a member is placed on probation and/or suspension will be determined by the coach/director.